

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 AF-06 NEA-10 ISO-00 IO-11 SAM-01 SAJ-01

CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05

PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 /088 W

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R 051935Z MAR 76

FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8546

INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY RABAT

AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT

C O N F I D E N T I A L PARIS 06803

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, FR, AG, SS, US

SUBJECT: MITTERRAND VISIT TO ALGERIA; SAHARA

REFS: (A) ALGIERS 584; (B) PARIS 6155 (BOTH NOTAL)

1. ROBERT PONTILLON, PS SECRETARY FOR INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS WHO ACCOMPANIED MITTERRAND ON HIS TRIP TO ALGERIA, TOLD EMBOFFS MARCH 5 THAT THE DELAY IN ISSUING THE JOINT PS-FLN COMMUNIQUE WAS DUE TO THE PS REFUSAL TO ACCEPT LANGUAGE PROPOSED BY THE ALGERIANS SHARPLY CRITICAL OF FRENCH GOVERNMENT POLICY TOWARDS ALGERIA AND PUTTING ISRAEL'S RIGHT TO EXISTENCE IN DOUBT. HE DESCRIBED THE ALGERIANS' RECEPTION OF MITTERRAND AS VERY CORDIAL AND CLEARLY DESIGNED TO BEFIT A FUTURE CHIEF OF GOVERNMENT.

2. PONTILLON SAID BOUMEDIENE HAD BEEN LESS MILITANT THAN HE HAD EXPECTED ON THE SAHARA QUESTION. BOUMEDIENE STRESSED THE SELF-DETERMINATION THEME, BUT SAID HE WANTED A DIPLOMATIC, NOT A MILITARY SOLUTION. PONTILLON MENTIONED TO EMBOFFS THE SHORT-LIVED, FRENCH-INSPIRED PROGRAM FOR COOPERATION IN THE SAHARA
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AMONG MOROCCO, ALGERIA, MAURITANIA, CHAD, MALI AND

NIGER, WHICH WAS DROPPED WHEN ALGERIA OBTAINED INDEPENDENCE, AND SAID THAT THE ANSWER TO CURRENT PROBLEMS MIGHT BE FOUND WITHIN SUCH A FRAMEWORK. HE ALSO SAID THAT BOUMEDIENE HAD SPOKEN OF TRYING TO FIND A REGIONAL SOLUTION, BUT IT WAS NOT CLEAR FROM PONTILLON'S REMARKS WHETHER THERE WAS ANY DISCUSSION WITH BOUMEDIENE ABOUT THE ILL-FATED FRENCH COLONIAL FRAMEWORK.

3. PONTILLON SAID THAT BOUMEDIENE CRITICIZED THE US BUT THAT HE ALSO SAID THE US EMBASSY IN ALGIERS HAD BEEN NEUTRAL ON THE SAHARA QUESTION, AS CONTRASTED WITH THE FRENCH EMBASSY'S ALLEGEDLY PRO-MOROCCAN ATTITUDE. MOST OF BOUMEDIENE'S CRITICISM OF THE IMPERIALISTIC PLOT AGAINST ALGERIA'S SOCIALIST OPTION WAS NOT DIRECTED AT THE U.S., BUT AT FRANCE, PONTILLON CONTINUED. BECAUSE GISCARD HAD BETRAYED HIS GAULLIST HERITAGE AND ADOPTED AN "ATLANTICIST" POLICY, HE FAVORED MOROCCO AND HAD NOT KEPT THE PLEDGES HE MADE DURING HIS VISIT TO ALGERIA LAST YEAR, BOUMEDIENE CLAIMED.

4. COMMENT: IN PRIVATE, PONTILLON (AS HAVE OTHER HIGH PS OFFICIALS) STUDIOUSLY AVOIDED SAYING THAT HE GIVES REAL CREDENCE TO BOUMEDIENE'S CHARGES AGAINST THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT. NONETHELESS, HIS ACCOUNT OF BOUMEDIENE'S ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE U.S. AS COMPARED TO FRANCE MAY HAVE BEEN INFLUENCED IN PART BY A NATURAL TENDENCY TO PRESENT GISCARD'S GOVERNMENT IN AN UNFAVORABLE LIGHT.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLITICAL LEADERS, VISITS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 05 MAR 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GolinoFR
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976PARIS06803
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760086-0160
From: PARIS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760390/aaaadbng.tel
Line Count: 91
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 ALGIERS 584, 76 PARIS 6155
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GolinoFR
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 19 APR 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <19 APR 2004 by ElyME>; APPROVED <20 APR 2004 by GolinoFR>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: MITTERRAND VISIT TO ALGERIA; SAHARA
TAGS: PFOR, FR, AG, SS, US, (MITTERRAND, FRANCOIS)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006